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THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

Graduate School of Media and Communications

**OPPORTUNITIES DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES PRESENT FOR WOMEN IN
MEDIA: MULTI-CASE STUDY OF NEWSROOMS IN KENYA**

By

FAITH P. ONEYA
535143

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts in Digital Journalism

Nairobi, Kenya

30/01/2020

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APPROVAL PAGE

The Aga Khan University
Graduate School of Media and Communications

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Digital Journalism

Members of the Thesis Evaluation Committee appointed to examine the thesis of
FAITH ONEYA-535143, found it satisfactory and recommended that it be accepted.



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DECLARATION

I, **FAITH ONEYA-535143**, declare that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university and that to the best of my knowledge it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. The editorial assistance provided to me has in no way added to the substance of my thesis, which is the product of my research endeavours.



Signature

30/01/2020

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my mother, the late Florence Agutu Owuor.
What you said would be has become. *Amenitendea*.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Aga Khan University Graduate School of Media and Communications (AKU-GSMC) abounds with wonderful and considerate people and this thesis would not have been possible without them. I am indebted to my supervisors Dr. Nancy Booker and Dr. Joseph Nyanoti whose rigor, dedication and passion challenged me to do and be more during this academic journey. Dr. Sam Kamau provided critical advice at the proposal stage of this project and helped shaped my thoughts; for that, I am grateful. I am also thankful to AKU-GSMC staff members Hesbon Owila, Kimweli Wambua and Henry Kibira who went beyond the call of duty to support me in my academic endeavours. The Vice Provost and Interim Dean Dr. Alex Awiti provided immeasurable advice and support throughout this journey. My sincere gratitude as well to the librarians Augustine Gitonga and George Mwangi. A special thank you to my treasured friends Fridah Miriti, Vincent Ng'ethe, Rachel Ombaka, Carlos Mureithi, Cicily Chomba who provided editing and moral support. To my colleagues David Aduda and Caroline Njung'e, thank you for your encouragement and support. To my sister Cynthia Owuor, thank you for constantly cheering me on. I thank my lovely daughter, Imora Omolo, who endured long absences by her mother. To my friends The Raiders, this is for us. Finally, all this would not have been possible without the cooperation of the research participants who sacrificed their time to share invaluable insights.

ABSTRACT

This study is an exploration of the opportunities digital technologies present for women in media. Digital technologies have been praised for providing opportunities to journalism as a whole but little is known regarding those offered to women in newsrooms. The objectives of this study were to: (a) determine new ways women are participating in journalism because of digitisation, (b) establish the new forms of journalism where women have thrived and (c) explore the structures that support women working with digital technologies in the newsroom. The theory that guided the study was Technological Determinism. It employed the phenomenological research tradition. The researcher conducted 12 in-depth interviews with purposefully sampled research participants from five media houses in Kenya: Nation Media Group, Standard Group, Mediamax, Royal Media Services, and Radio Africa Group. Data were analysed thematically and presented in a narrative format. The study did not find an association between digital technologies and women's rise in the media. The results suggest that digital technologies have created substantial opportunities for women in the newsroom as sources, gatherers and decision-makers but the bulk of these lie outside the newsroom where women have used these digital technologies to reinvent and rebrand themselves as content creators, content aggregators and influencers and this is where they have thrived. The results also showed that the research participants found the current structures in digital departments inadequate and in some cases, non-existent. The study concluded that digital technologies offer great potential and opportunities for women in newsrooms but there are barriers, including structures in the newsroom, that need to be addressed for these women to fully benefit. Such structures include gender-sensitive workplace policies, flexi-time, mentorship and flexi-assignments. The study recommends for appropriate gender-sensitive policies, training and mentorship should be implemented by media houses to help them tap fully into the benefits of digital technologies for women.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AFP:	Agence France-Presse
AKU-GSMC:	Aga Khan University Graduate School of Media and Communications
ASNE:	American Society of News Editors
AU:	African Union
AWCS:	African Woman and Child Services
AWMC:	American Women's Media Center
BBC:	British Broadcasting Corporation
ICFJ:	International Center for Journalists
KEG:	Kenya Editors' Guild
MCK:	Media Council of Kenya
PwC:	PricewaterhouseCoopers